



ADDRESS

OF

MAJOR DAVIS ALTON,

UNITED STATES ARMY,

BEFORE THE

WORKING MEN'S NATIONAL UNION LEAGUE,

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 1863,

AT LYCEUM HALL, NEW ORLEANS.

NEW ORLEANS:

PRINTED AT "THE ERA" BOOK AND JOB OFFICE,
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WORKING MEN'S NATIONAL UNION LEAGUE FOR THE STATE OF LOUISIANA.

LYCEUM HALL,

MONDAY EVENING, May 11, 1863. }

At a meeting of the WORKING MEN'S NATIONAL UNION LEAGUE, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, and officers elected delegates for a Convention to organize a State Government, viz: J. M. Burchard, T. J. Earhart, Dr. W. H. Hire, Mr. Fisk, Mr. D. Christie.

WHEREAS, The time has arrived when the unconditional Union men of the State of Louisiana should unite as one political organization for the purpose of making a new Constitution and putting into operation a free soil State Government for the State of Louisiana.

AND WHEREAS, Every white mechanic and laborer throughout the State, from the age of eighteen years and upwards, should immediately take measures to organize Working Men's Union Leagues in every parish throughout the State, with a view of carrying said State organization into effect;

AND WHEREAS, With all deference to the opinions of our loyal fellow citizens throughout the State, we are prompted to set forth the motives that impel us to action; therefore,

Be it resolved, That the undersigned true, loyal and unconditional Union men of the Parish of Orleans, do hereby form themselves into a Working Men's National Union League for the State of Louisiana, for the purpose of forming a State Constitution, in which the rights of white men will be secured and slavery abolished in the State of Louisiana.

Resolved, That we approve and endorse all and every act or measure of His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, and the Congress thereof, or which may hereafter be adopted by the Federal authorities for the purpose of crushing out this cruel and bloody rebellion against the Government of the United States, the only Government on the earth where the downtrodden and oppressed of all nations may find an asylum of peace and repose.

Resolved, That we will advocate the right of suffrage to all white male inhabitants from the age of eighteen years and upwards, without regard to the length of time they may have resided in the State, provided they are true, loyal and unconditional Union men.

Resolved, That we will advocate the colonization of all persons of African descent from the State of Louisiana.

Resolved, That we shall affiliate with all open Union organizations for carrying into effect this State organization.

Resolved, That we invite all Union Leagues throughout the State to communicate to this League their organization, setting forth the number of its members, and any other information on this subject for the good of this cause.

THOS. J. EARHART, *President*.

D. CHRISTIE, *Vice President*.

J. R. TERRY, *Senior Secretary*.

A. JEHLLEN, *Assistant Secretary*.

STATE CONVENTION.

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted at a meeting of the Working Men's National Union League, at the Lyceum Hall, Tuesday evening, June 2d, 1863 :

WHEREAS, The Union Association of the Parishes of Orleans and Jefferson have, through delegates in general committee assembled, made and adopted a plan for calling a State Convention, with a view of framing a new Constitution for the State of Louisiana :

AND WHEREAS, Every white man throughout the State should immediately take measures to organize Working Men's Union Leagues in every parish throughout the State, with a view of carrying into effect said plan ; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Working Men's National Union League of the Parish of Orleans do hereby ratify, approve and adopt said plan.

Resolved, That the question of slavery is a question of capital over free labor ; and when we behold this bloody war, waged for the maintenance of this monopoly, which is contrary to the very best interests of a free people, we think it high time to sap and undermine the foundation of this absurd and tyrannical system.

Resolved, That we regard the man who earns his living by the sweat of his brow, as the very corner-stone of a Republican Government, and that we, as true working men, will no longer submit to be ruled by this Black God of the South, but that we are determined to have a Constitution formed, in which the rights of white men will be secured.

Resolved, That we endorse and approve all and every act or measure of His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, and the Congress thereof, or which may hereafter be adopted by the Federal authorities for the purpose of crushing out this cruel and bloody rebellion.

Resolved, That we will not support nor vote for any man as a delegate to said Convention who will not pledge himself to advocate a free soil State Government.

T. J. EARHART, *President*.

D. CHRISTIE, *Vice President*.

J. R. TERRY, *Senior Secretary*.

Junior Secretary.

A D D R E S S .

The position in which the laboring classes—the free white working classes—the working men of this city, of the State of Louisiana, indeed of the thirty-five States composing this Union, as connected with the wealth, the prosperity, the happiness and progress of a free people and the strength of the American Republic, is as proud as that position is dignified and honorable. In this life and death struggle for our national existence, none have a deeper interest in the success of the cause of the Union than the working men of the whole nation ; and upon the working men of no other State rests a responsibility more weighty than upon you, who compose this Working Men's Union League. The organization of this association—your presence here to-night—this respectable audience, which has, I am fully persuaded, been attracted here on this occasion by your influence and praiseworthy example—the earnest zeal you have manifested for the preservation of the Union of these States from the commencement of the rebellion, surrounded as you have been from that hour by traitors and conspirators, convinces me of your determination that this rebellion shall be destroyed and that this Government shall be preserved. And my convictions are stronger and more firmly fixed as I see the large number of ladies who grace this Hall by their presence this evening, thus publicly sanctioning the work in which you are engaged. No righteous cause can fail, if sanctioned, advocated and defended by bold, resolute and patriotic women. And I declare it to you as my candid opinion, which I frankly do in all the sincerity of my nature, if the working men of this great nation, supported by the moral influence and encouraging counsels of their wives and daughters, resolve and determine that this Government shall be saved from destruction and this Union from dissolution, it will be, and no power on earth can, under any pretext or by any device, prevent it. He who shall attempt it will be ground to powder.

The prosecution of this war against treason and traitors, is but the continuance of the contest which has been going on for three thousand years between the aristocracy and the middle classes—"the toiling millions" and despotic rule. During all that period, man has striven firmly and resolutely to obtain an acknowledgement of his civil rights and his rights in matters of politics or religion. Old reverence has been the tool used by despots. Superstitious fears have been worked upon. Falschhood, trickery and the dungeon have been resorted to ; while the bayonet and the scaffold have been used for the purpose of defrauding him out of his rights as an equal. History makes no mention of the period when man has not struggled to be free—free to eat the bread he has earned by the sweat of his own brow—free to breathe, speak, write and publish his own thoughts—free to lay the taxes himself shall pay—free to "worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience." The torch of civil war now blazes in fearful splendor over this Republic, brilliantly illuminating the pathway and guiding the footsteps of those who search for a simple principle and for a single natural right—the principle and right of personal freedom. Like water this nation is now pouring out its life-blood. Behold it clothed in habiliments of the deepest mourning—its brave and gallant sons marching by hundreds and thousands into the deadly conflict, leaving their bloody testimonials on each square yard they traverse. And for what? In support of this single right, and in defense of this one principle.

The working men of this great city, citizens of this beautiful State, and working men in each of the Southern States, who bear arms in the face of our common enemy or contend against the usurpations of treason and of traitors, by their moral influence and example through associations such as you have organized, are new recruits in the old contest for man's natural rights—for his personal freedom. You and they are but carrying forward the grand work of redeeming mankind from the thralldom of tyrannical oppression, and a blighting, crushing aristocracy. And why? Because the leaders of the rebellion declare—indeed, it is one of their fixed, determined, aye, boasted objects—should they succeed in establishing a Southern Confederacy, to restrict the right of the citizen's franchise, and, as a necessary consequence, to exclude him from all places of honor, confidence and trust, either in the gift of the people or at the suffrance of their constituted authorities, should he fail to come within their arbitrary requirements. And how? By the imposing such a property qualification

as shall oblige every man to be the owner of a given number of acres of land or the master of a fixed number of negro slaves. Unless he shall possess these, he is to be excluded from the most highly prized right of an American freeman—the right of suffrage. This accomplished, what, I pray you, becomes of the personal and private rights—the natural and political rights of the poor white working man of Louisiana? He will be shut out from the ballot-box, debarred from all participation in any act pertaining to the welfare of this city, the State and General Government under which he is compelled to live, as would be his children and his children's children for all time to come. Now, then, let me ask you this plain question. Under such restriction, who votes, the land and the negro slaves, or their owner? Because a free white man is not the owner and possessor of a fixed value in property, either in land or slaves, is his intelligence thereby necessarily impaired and his judgment incapacitated? Is he, on this account, incapable of exercising this personal right? Because the free white citizen is a poor man, is he, as a necessary consequence, incapable of distinguishing who is or is not most capable of administering the government and executing the laws?

Under the proposed regulation and restriction, he is to be excluded, however intelligent, however talented as a political essayist, literary writer and author, or gifted as a poet and an orator. The law will be inexorable. There will be no evading, avoiding or escaping its tyrannical execution. Will the spectacle not be as novel as it is humiliating, to see intelligent white men going to the polls with certificates in their hands from those authorized to issue them, and their right of voting based upon the therein enumerated number of acres of land and negro slaves of which they are certified to be the owners? A man may have the mechanical ability to prepare the models and build a steam engine, an ocean steamer, engineer and construct a railroad, bridge the widest river and tunnel the highest mountain, possess in the highest degree the refined taste of an artist, and with his own hands chisel, polish and produce the most beautiful and finished statuary—indeed, be a master of any art or science, capable of executing any work requiring mechanical skill and mental capacity, fitted to grace and adorn the most polished and refined society, and yet, if he is so unfortunate (and there are thousands who are) as not to be the owner of a given number of acres of land and a fixed number of negro slaves, he is to be excluded from all right and every privilege at the ballot-box. Under the regulation proposed by the leaders of the

rebellion, how many are there in this audience who would be excluded by this iron rule from the right of franchise? It is undeniable and unmistakable, that the master-spirits of secession are determined to subordinate the poor classes—the working men of the South—sink its working classes under the heel of a grinding aristocracy, and over it establish a military despotism.

But, let me not be misunderstood. I have no disposition to create prejudice or counsel hatred and antipathy in the minds of working men against the men of wealth. Capital and labor should move along, hand in hand, harmoniously together. Thus moving, labor depending upon capital for employment, and capital depending upon labor for its dividends, each should move without jar or discord, and the personal, private and public rights of the humblest working man be equally as well guarded and tenaciously protected as those of the wealthiest man in the state or nation. By the broad hands, strong arms, resolute spirit and physical endurance of the working men of the State, its wealth, greatness and power is created. The labor of working men cannot be dispensed with, employed as it is, and necessarily must be, in every branch of industry and in every department of business enterprise. It is as unreasonable to suppose, and equally as absurd, that the crops of the planter and farmer will grow without copious rains, the steam engine move a train of railroad cars or propel the mammoth ocean steamship without steam, or that a sailing vessel can cross the Atlantic without wind and sails, as that a nation or state can prosper and become wealthy without the aid of manual labor—without the work of the strong hands “of the toiling millions.” Yet, holding the prominent and important position you do as laboring men, because you do labor with your bare hands, self-appointed and self-conceited aristocrats declare your avocation a “vulgar” one. By them, whose iron heels have ever pressed hard upon your necks, you are denominated “common people,” “poor white trash,” an “irresponsible rabble,” “the heels of society,” “greasy mechanics,” and, because you can write your names legibly and read without spelling out the syllables which compose the words you read, they anathematize you as “moon-struck philosophers,” fit only to be working men, because you are poor and white.

With this estimate of the position, socially and politically, which the leaders of the rebellion place upon the poor white working men of the South, to what grade are you, as a necessary consequence, reduced? The

answer is plain, simple and short : to the grade of negro slaves. These they have hitherto owned, nor do they now intend to relinquish their ownership in them. They declare it as a fundamental principle of their political economy, that capital should own its own labor, and they have given you no assurance that it is not their determination to own the white labor of the South. They declare as a fundamental principle on which the Southern Confederacy is to be based, that "equality is not the right of man," but that "equality is the right of equals only." To be equals—to be entitled to a place in first class circles, in what they denominate polished society—to be recognized as fit associates with equals, he who thus presumes must be the inheritor of a large estate and a drove of negro slaves. Besides this inheritance, in his veins must run blood that has descended from an ancient and popular family. This, then, is the condition which entitles him to equality. He must be born rich, of popular parentage, and with ancient blood in his veins. To labor is "vulgar." To labor is the exclusive province of black and white slaves.

Now, the wealth which any can possess must be acquired either through inheritance or by manual labor. If you perform such labor you are vulgar, and therefore excluded from the rights of equals, and, as a necessary consequence, reduced to the condition of slaves under this now system of Southern Confederate political economy. And, working men of New Orleans, the question for your own deliberation and decision is, whether you, intellectual, intelligent, thinking, reasoning men, will consent that your merit, your manhood, and the blood which circulates through your veins, and through the veins of your own progeny, shall be measured by the same rule by which the blood, quality and stock of the brute creation is measured and estimated? The idea is as preposterous and illogical as it is supremely and ridiculously absurd. It is the offshoot of a detested and demoralized aristocracy, driving you to the abasing alternative of admitting that your reasoning, thinking and reflecting faculties, your intelligence and intellectual capacities, are capable of being improved only as the dumb beasts of the field are improved; denying, practically and theoretically, that intelligent man is a part of Deity itself, but more nearly allied to the brute creation. The theory, the avowed declarations, and the logical deductions of that theory, and the declarations of the conspiring traitors of Louisiana and the Southern Confederacy, lead directly to this conclusion: "slavery is the natural and moral condition of the negro." And why? Because he was created only

to labor. The natural and moral condition of the poor white working man should be slavery also, by the same logic, because he is poor and compelled to labor to obtain a subsistence. Negro slaves are property, like oxen, horses and mules. Poor white working men should be property, because they labor as negro slaves, oxen, horses and mules do. Capital should own its own labor. Negro slaves and poor white men labor, therefore negro slaves and poor white men should be owned by capitalists. We hear much of negro equality, that this war is a negro war, a war whose object is to make negroes equal to white men. Now I appeal to you, in all candor, to tell me who are using their whole power to establish negro equality. Is it President Lincoln, the army and the navy, or those who are conspiring to establish a Southern Confederacy?

“Slavery and democracy cannot exist together,” is the truthful utterance of an able Southern traitor. A greater truth never fell from the lips of mortal man. It is the firm resolve of Southern traitors, and should they succeed in overturning this Government they will faithfully carry out that resolution, to destroy the great principle of democracy, and upon its ruins build up a social aristocracy. For this purpose treason has been nursed and rebellion raised against it. For this the dissolution of the Union is attempted, that the institution of slavery may be strengthened where it did exist, and extend it into territory where it is unrecognized by the Constitution and unknown to the laws. To accomplish this, to strengthen and save an institution which is tottering and in imminent danger of falling by reason of its own overburthened weight, even, indeed, if its own friends have not already destroyed it, and put an end to the natural conflict that ever has and always will exist between slave and free labor in the slave States, it becomes a matter of absolute necessity to save the one or drag down the poor working white men of these States to the status of slaves—to own you and your labor, to possess, own and control the labor of yourselves, your wives, your sons and your daughters. When I declare to you, working men of New Orleans, that negro slavery has hung upon you and your public and private interests, and weighed down the brightest hopes of all you have in the future as with leaden weights, I but declare a truth you must admit and which can not be successfully controverted. In this declaration I am fully sustained by Alexander H. Stephens, who says: “This, our new Government, is the first in the history of the world based upon the great physical, philosophical and moral truth,” that “slavery is the natural and moral condi-

tion of the negro." In this declaration I am also sustained by L. W. Spratt, a leading traitor of Charleston, South Carolina, who, in a letter addressed to John Perkins, a citizen of your own State, and at the time the letter was written a member of the Montgomery Convention, declared that "slavery and democracy could not exist together." These declarations, coupled with the declarations of other equally distinguished Southern traitors, and the expressions of the Southern rebel newspaper press generally, convinces me beyond all question or cavil, that the great and primary object of the rebellion is to reduce poor white working men in the South to the same degraded condition of the negro slave. If this is true, either slave labor or free white labor must fall. And it belongs to you, to the working men of this State and of the whole Union, to decide whether free white men and free white labor shall or shall not fall—whether it shall or shall not sink in gloom and irretrievable disgrace, or whether slavery and slave labor shall yield to you, your natural rights and just claims. In this very Hall, on this platform where I now stand, you have heard traitor orators earnestly appeal to those who employed laborers, to employ none but slaves—not to employ white men, because they demoralized the negroes, and the only morals they left in a community were empty whisky barrels. This is the estimate placed by these men upon the morals of white laborers.

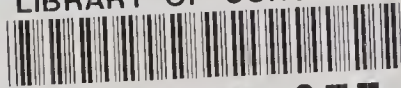
If this Southern Confederacy, the aggregation of all political iniquities, is established, slave labor will, in the future as it has in the past, press you still closer to the wall, with the thumb-screws of a landed aristocracy turned more tightly upon you than ever before, thereby dragging you down to a depth lower, more degrading and deplorable than that of the Russian serf or the Mexican peon. This, then, is the Government which traitors and rebels, the master spirits of this rebellion, are *contriving* for you ; a Government which, in its inception, instead of providing for human wants, on the contrary, ingeniously *contrives* how not to provide for them, thereby intentionally nullifying and repudiating the well received axiom of one of England's most profound jurists and statesmen, Edmund Burke, that "Government is the contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants." You cannot, therefore, mistake or misunderstand the condition into which they who are conspiring against the liberties of the Republic and your individual rights as free white men are resolved to sink you. Upon whatever side you turn, you hear the groans of the wounded, the sick and the dying. To whatever point you

cast your eyes, you see desolation, waste and devastation, mourning and bitter tears. You see the rich soil of the fair fields of this beautiful State crimsoned with the blood of brave men. Remember, and I earnestly entreat you not to forget, they have gallantly fallen in defense of the great principles of constitutional liberty and your personal and undivided freedom.

Before I conclude, and in consideration of all that is transpiring about us, you will allow me to thank you for the organization of this "Working-Men's National Union League." Be firm in the noble stand you have taken, and neither be intimidated by the threats of traitors or seduced by the false promises of your enemies. Be vigilant in the discharge of the solemn and responsible duties you have self-imposed by the organization of this League. Be zealous and untiring in your efforts to increase its numbers and in enlarging the circle of your influence. Let me conjure you to never tire in your labors to suppress this causeless rebellion, even though the cannon of the enemy shall boom at your doors. Let me also conjure you to stand firmly and unflinchingly by each other in this sad hour of your country's peril. In this dark hour, when your individual rights are subjected to a test as cruel as it is fiery, be true to yourselves. Stand by that glorious old flag, "that banner of beauty and emblem of glory." Stand by the Constitution and the Government, the Union and the laws, and those who have been chosen and sworn faithfully to administer and execute them, and the cause of the Union will triumph, and the personal and political rights of the working men of the South will be so securely established that no power on earth can overturn or destroy them. Be true to yourselves, to the great principle of personal freedom, and working men will hereafter occupy the proud position intended by the Fathers of the Republic and contemplated by the genius of our free institutions. Remember! remember! and I earnestly charge you never to forget, that the triumph of our cause will be the guarantee that hereafter, in Louisiana, in all the South—

"Every man shall act a glorious part,
If sound in mind and of a loyal heart,
Prompt to sustain the honor of our sires,
Prompt to defend our altars and our fires,
Forever battling in our good old cause,
Our noble Constitution and our laws."

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